

The Honorable Weinstein
US Courthouse
East District of NY
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

FILED
IN CLERKS OFFICE
U.S. DISTRICT COURT E.D.N.Y.
★ JUN 20 2016 ★
BROOKLYN OFFICE

Dear Judge Weinstein:

Everyday in the media we hear and see help and tons of phone numbers for addictions to drugs, addictions to alcohol. Where do sex addictions ask for help? We need psychological help for sexual offenders, a difference from sexual predators, before the offences are done. Prison is not the answer.

My son has been incarcerated for sexual offense of pornography, all internet, not physical, not contact. Up to five years ago, he had a promising future; with military(18 years) , job, home and overall life. I have hopes that in the near future people with these psychological issues will be able to reach out for help without fear of being turned over to law enforcement. The rules/law that are there is a barrier that actually prevents offenders from seeking help; they fear of asking for help because the stigma in our society is they are monsters and can't be cured. Not all are, and actually have no where, no one to turn to. This is all because of the mandatory reporting required of the professional; that they could possibly face punishable consequences if not reported. He wanted to reach for help many times and was scared of our current process.

I have a quote from an article I read in Psychology Today, November/December, 2015 issue:
From Elizabeth Letourneau, Director of Moore Center for Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, John Hopkins University: "There are absolutely people who have started down the road of offending who want to stop, they don't get help because between mandatory reporting and lifetime sex offender registration, the consequences are too much to bear." Another quote from same article by Joan Tabachnick, co chair of the prevention committee of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers: "The isolation is ultimately more dangerous than the feelings themselves. Sex abuse thrives in isolation, and shame sets the isolation in concrete. If we can begin to break apart that shame and isolation, we'll be much more likely to intervene earlier in the cycle. The environment that allows sex abuse to thrive would be eroded.

A country to research is Germany, they have started a program for those who want to seek help before anything happens or anyone is hurt and they have been very successful in treating these individuals; therefore reducing the prison overcrowding they experienced before the program.

If my son had any of this aid/help he wouldn't be where he is at today. He knew he had a problem and didn't know where to safely ask for help understanding this.

I am so thankful to God that his actions did not involve any physical/verbal contact or harm by him to anyone; his actions consisted of voyerism of child pornography only. He is not a violent person. He wanted/needed help, just had nowhere, no one to turn to.

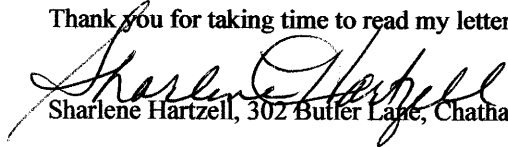
Currently, because of being coerced into a plea deal versus going to trial and taking chance of more time, he is serving five years in a low security prison in which when he is released he has to serve another five-years in probation and participation in a treatment program. They charged him with possession and dropped transportation (he took his computer across the state line when he traveled). Also, the image figure totals (imaging and videos) had to have been doubled, if not tripled; they took two computers, iphone, a USB drive and ipad. My son swears there is no way he had the images that they counted. (Someone from my hometown molested his 14 year old daughter for the past four years, got 160 days and two years probation. What gives - are we telling everyone touching, molesting and raping is ok and not half as bad as viewing porn.

I just haven't figured this system out, nor think it can be figured out, why someone who molests a child, has sex with a child or takes and promotes pictures and videos of abusing children violently get off with less time, slap on the hand, than someone who has no history in any kind of crime, non-violent and was never a risk to the community. I recently read one person received 30 months probation for child porn; a different one 10 years for child pornography. There are so many others in my research I have come across that just doesn't make sense.

I just wish he wouldn't have to spend so much time in prison so he would be able to continue with the mental aid and Sex Anonymous Association meeting program which has helped him tremendously. Also to continue to get his life in order and contribute to society as I know he would.

In conclusion, I believe everyone should have somewhere/ someone to turn to for help without fear of persecution and try to stop this unending issue we have created with our current laws and rules of sexual abuse. This is a short version of what is currently happening and how much help is needed. I have so much more that I can say but this would go on forever.

Thank you for taking time to read my letter.


Sharlene Hartzell, 302 Butler Lane, Chatham, IL 62629

Enclosed:

I wanted to share a copy of my son's verbal communication with the Judge on the day of his sentencing. Brent's lawyer didn't think it would be good for me to have any verbal statement with Judge.

PS:

I have also shared this letter all the judges that were mentioned in the article Federal judges argue for reduced sentence for child-porn convicts. I know this was an 2009 article but I needed to start somewhere. If you can put me in touch with anyone else, I would do that.

Also, I have contacted my district Senators in Illinois; they have recognized receipt of my letter.

[Third, the article I mentioned of November/December Psychology Today is spot on. I wish these professors had support from others.

I would like to start off by saying thank you for letting me speak on my behalf. What I had done was inexcusable and very morally wrong. And I can not began to imagine the emotional pain that I have caused and the pain of the individuals connected to it. I would like to take this time to try and explain my actions and to tell my story.

I grew up in a typical small town. Had parents who raised me to the up most best of their abilities, and would bend over backwards to care for there two kids. I have a mother today that will still go above and beyond to care for, love, and help. My sister and I grew up, like typical siblings. We also fought like typical siblings. But the love of family is still there. Growing up I had a somewhat out casted feeling partly on being a red head and being picked on and bullied. I developed a shyness and shell that I had put up. I held feelings and emotions inside.

After graduation in 1996 I joined the Air Force and began to open up but still kept a lot buried deep down inside. I stayed far away from drugs and alcoholism because I had friends who had fallen into those addictions and I had seen what they have done to them. I had gotten my own computer and soon I developed a small addiction to pornography on it. At the time it hadn't completely taken over my life.

In 1999, while still active in the Air Force, I had gotten a call from home. I learned that I had just lost my father to suicide. This was a very very dark time in my life. I had so many questions. Like why and was it me? I had grown up always wanting to make my parents proud, and especially get my fathers approval. This moment in my life started me on a long downward spiral and to keep more emotions locked in.

Pornography, like a drug addiction or alcoholism, gave me a means of escape. It gave me a whole different world to be in. Overtime it grew. I spent more and more time in this other world. Over the years I became more and more dependent on it. I had multiple failed relationships and a failed marriage that sent me deep into depression. I also had many suicidal thoughts. So like any other drug, I searched for newer highs. I looked for what I thought, in my own sick twisted unhealthy mind, was an even greater high. What I would search for grew darker and darker. And through this time with the growth of the internet, it became easier and easier to obtain.

When I would come down out of these "highs" and out of the second world I created, I looked back at what I did, what I was doing. Then I felt worst. Sick of myself. Disgusted with myself and what I was doing. I thought that if it was my niece or nephew or even if I had a child of my own, what would I want to do to that person who was putting it there for the world to see. I would be so infuriated. I had the most respect for my niece and nephew. I loved them dearly and would never wanted to hurt them. I helped my sister raise them and like if they were kids of my own, I was there for them anytime.

I knew I was going down a path that could lead to trouble. But with any addiction, there's times when you don't care. You just want that high again. It would be like a roller coaster ride. Up and down. And a vicious never ending cycle. All it would do was cause me to devote more and more time to it. Which in then, I was spending less time with my family, friends, relationships. My time at work started to suffer. Times I should have been in bed sleeping, diminished. Normal activities that I loved to do; fishing, camping, sports, spending time with my dog, or working on and taking care of my car, etc. All of these had receded down to almost nothing at all.

I feel the need to stress the point that what I had done, despite it was illegal, I did NOT have any physical contact with any child that would be deemed inappropriate. I had not taking any pictures or videos, posted pictures or videos, nor have I asked for or received any from anybody in person or by online contact. My actions were strictly voyeurism. The one thing that I did have control over was the fact that I never wanted to cross that "border" and start the physical aspect of it. I don't have children of my own so I have always loved my niece and nephew with the up most of caring love that I would never ever wanted to hurt them. I would like to also add that I have not had any violent activities, nor had any prior convictions.

In 2006 I started an apprenticeship with Richardson Manufacturing. I became a CNC machine operator. It was along the same means of work my father did. He taught me some knowledge of it back when I was in school. Here and there I may have not liked the company I worked for, but I loved what I did. I worked there until March of 2015. The time I was there I learn vast knowledge of many different types of machine equipment and machining techniques that I past on to others who came in after me. I kind of became a go to person for questions and advise.

2008 I volunteered with my guard unit and activated to Quincy, IL to help out in the flood control efforts that were implemented in that area. I was awarded an achievement medal and a state activation medal.

2010 I volunteered for deployment to Afghanistan to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom. An experience that will live with me to the day I die. I was sent to Camp Leatherneck and attached to Camp Bastion both of which, at the time, were forward operating bases in the Helmand province. While there I was tasked and assisted in many air mobility missions that supported cargo movements, troops movements, and mail. I also lead missions supporting special forces with their transportation needs. I took pride in knowing that I was helping troops down range get the ammo, supplies, and equipment they needed. I was awarded a NATO medal for my direct support of the ISAF forces. I was awarded the Afghanistan campaign medal with star for my deployment and being in a combat zone.

About this time is when I really started actively looking for this sick internet pornography content. My addiction didn't leave me.

February 2nd, 2015 was the day both my worlds crashed when the agents showed up. In retrospect, I'm glad it happened. It was this blinding flash of the obvious that had lead me to say you need to get you head straight and get help. The shame and explaining myself to many people hurt so bad, and I never ever want to go through it again. It was also seeing the pain, fear, hurt, and love in my mothers eyes. She wanted answers, but most of all, she wanted her son to be healthy and right. No turning back now, it was out in the open. I needed help.

I got the help I very much wanted and needed. I have completed many sessions with doctors and therapist that have helped me out tremendously. Medication for my anxiety and depression. Something I should have done long long time ago.

Almost a year has passed since my arrest. I have been under house arrest and monitoring since then and have complied with all rules and regulations specified by my parole officer. During this time I have obtained a job, attend therapy every other week, and attend Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings twice a week. I am willing, able, and content to continue to improve myself.

"God, grant me the serenity, to accept the things I can not change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference"

That is the prayer we open and close every meeting with in Sex Addicts Anonymous. I have been attending these meetings every Monday and Thursday for about 8 months now. When you read about the program of SAA the very first line reads "Attending SAA meetings starts us on a new way of life". That's where I'm going and where I wanna be. It is a 12 step program based on spiritual principles. Meeting there I have discovered that I'm not alone. There are people who are there cause they have suffered from many different types of painful, compulsive sexual behaviors. Listening to other members share about their recovery, I know that in order to make the same kind of progress and recovery, I need to be willing to do whatever it takes to get sexually abstinent and to stay abstinent. And so far, I have been for about 8 months now. I am willing to change my way of life, and remove all my defects of character. SAA also provides a fellowship where I know that at anytime I can call on a member for help, advise, or for just a pick me up. I have learned that my acting out behavior has cause a "bubble" around me were I held all the secrets in of my actions but never let nothing in. Just like being in a different world. And not letting anything in would be where I let my addiction control myself and losing touch with family and letting it take the majority of my life and time. I have learned to pop that bubble and never wanting it to surround and take control of me again. I have used the three circles principle to separated my acting out behaviors between my borderline behaviors and my good behaviors. This helps me in identifying activities that are good, healthy and I enjoy doing versus the activities that I don't want to return to. And also the ones that could make me slip and fall back into the inner circle where I don't wanna be.

My Air Force career is over. I lost my job at Richardson's. But I have persevered and have found a job working as a support personnel at Macy's. Which is going great. The people there all like me and I sure do like working with them. I have showed them that I can be dependable, show up on time, work hard, and be someone they can count on. When I started there I just wanted to be the best I can be. Do the best I can do.

So I would like to say thank you again for letting me have my time to speak to you and let you know where I'm coming from, who I am, who I was, where I wanna be, and where I don't want to go back to. From the very bottom of my heart, I truly, honestly, am sorry for what I have done. I am a good person, taking steps to better myself. -- Thank you very much!